**Sent:** Saturday, September 01, 2012 9:55 AM  
**To:** Lee-Anne Trimble Spalding  
**Subject:** first two weeks

Mrs. Spalding,  
Well the first two weeks of school have passed, on my first three day weekend and got my first "big girl" paycheck!  I meant to take pictures of my classroom before I left on Friday but completely forgot so I will send pictures next week.  
My school is absolutely amazing!  I didn't know what to expect, especially with it being a charter school but I am continually impressed.  We had a CSUSA (that is the company that runs our schools) summit the Friday before pre-planning started and that was really impressive.  It was at the Rosen Shingle Creek, we had breakfast, lunch and snacks served, along with free give aways.  The whole thing was about saying thank you to the teachers and getting ready for the school year.  Our CEO walked from table to table and asked us if we had questions or feedback.  We are nonprofit and he discussed how he doesn't believe in for profit charter schools, he just believes in making change.  It was a wonderful to feel so appreciated and respected.  
The school is full of happy energized teachers.  It is well known that if you lose your drive or become negative then you will be let go.  Everyone is on annual contracts and nobody is worried about that.  Also we take benchmarks once a quarter and nobody is stressed or negative about it.  School wide it is just viewed as a way to improve.  I see so many of the things that you are suppose to do and so much energy.  Almost every teacher has a theme in their classroom and every year it is a big tradition to go "room hopping" to check it out.  We also have a very supportive school climate.  At least one teacher a day comes to check on me and when they found out I was new, new they were so excited to see what "fresh" ideas I had.  
We have a very active Principal.  She walks around all day.  In the two weeks she has already been in my classroom 3 times and the Assistant Principal 5 times.  They just poke their head in, sometimes sit down and then leave you a little note card with what they liked and after another week or so will start leaving suggestions.  
We go to school a little longer than the average school day.  Our kids get PE every day and specials M, T, Th, F.  There is half an hour mandated for Social Studies and half an hour mandated for Science.  But you do have the option to combine them for a full hour and then flip-flop units.  Mrs. Thompson (our principal) mandates that SS and Science be project based and the textbooks to be used as a resource instead of as the lesson.  
I have also been super fortunate with my fourth grade team.  There are five of us.  One moved up from third grade (our team lead & I knew her previously) and the other four of us are new but I am the only first year teacher.  Four of us mesh really well, the other teammate seems to have a lot of negative interactions with a lot of people.  So far that is the only negative to the whole experience.  I just know that our principal views us all as a family and she says "happy and supported teachers are successful and creative teachers."  We team plan, each of us is in charge of a subject.  We do have the freedom to tweak our lesson plans but you are suppose to follow the meat of the lesson.  If you want to try a new system or major idea, that is fine but you have to "pitch" the idea to Mrs. Thompson and then show data to demonstrate success.  If it is successful normally she rolls it out to the whole school.  
I have 22 kiddos, I started with 23 but one of them moved.  We do have a waiting list so I might be getting another one in.  I have a promethean board, a teacher laptop, 4 student netbook laptops, a document camera and an IT guy that is amazing. Basically I am thrilled to be where I am!  I will be back at UCF sometime in the next year working on a masters (hopefully).  Almost everybody at my school has a higher degree or they are working on one.  
How are Gavin and Graham?  How is the semester going?  And how is that dissertation going?  
  
Miss stopping by your office!  
Ashley